

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
PROPOSED MANHAN RIVER DAM FISH PASSAGE PROJECT
MANHAN DAM FISH PASSAGE CONSTRUCTION
EASTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in partnership with the City of Easthampton and other partners, is proposing to complete the Manhan River Dam Fish Passage Project in Easthampton, Massachusetts.

The purpose of the Project is to enhance the ecological diversity of the Manhan River by restoring access to spawning and rearing habitat for migratory fishes. The Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzes the impacts of four alternatives, including the Proposed Action, a No Action Alternative, and two additional action alternatives. The Proposed Action involves the construction of a Denil type fish ladder and downstream passage pipe at the Manhan River Dam in Easthampton, Massachusetts. These facilities will provide anadromous fish passage to spawning and rearing areas upstream from the dam in the Manhan River and its tributaries. The fishways also will be utilized by the catadromous American eel, as well as resident riverine species (*i.e.*, white sucker, trout). The fish ladder will provide access to approximately 11 miles of spawning and nursery habitat in the mainstem and North Branch of the Manhan for anadromous species such as American shad, blueback herring, sea lamprey, and Atlantic salmon, as well as rearing habitat for the American eel.

The fish ladder will be constructed on the right bank of the river and will tie into the existing spillway. No significant long term or short term adverse impacts to the environment are anticipated. Construction will begin on or after June 2010, when river conditions permit and there would be minimum impact to migratory fish species.

Under the No Action Alternative, the Manhan River Dam would not be modified to facilitate fish passage, and historical spawning and rearing habitat would continue to be inaccessible to migratory fishes. Alternative 2 consists of installing a fish lift at the dam, and Alternative 3 evaluates dam removal as a means of achieving fish passage.

The Proposed Action will have negligible, if any, impacts on the human environment, including natural and cultural resources such as air quality, geology, water quality, riverine processes and sediment chemistry, threatened and endangered species, essential fish habitat, and cultural and economic resources. The construction of the fish ladder at the Manhan River Dam will have no effect upon any structure or site of historic, architectural, or archaeological significance as defined by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and implementing regulations 36 CFR 800. By letter dated January 24, 2002, the Massachusetts Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) issued a determination that the project will have no adverse effect on the Manhan Dam and Waterworks complex.

The Service finds there will be no significant impacts resulting from the proposed activities of the Project. The Proposed Action provides net benefits that far outweigh its potential impacts on the natural and human environment. Therefore, the Service concludes that a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) be issued for the proposed Project.

This determination of a FONSI is based on the Environmental Assessment and the following considerations:

1. The project will restore a historical anadromous fisheries corridor and increase the fisheries carrying capacity of the Manhan River ecosystem.
2. The project will have no known negative impacts on any State or Federal rare or endangered species.
3. The project will have no known negative impacts on any historic or prehistoric archaeological sites recorded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
4. Sediment loading would be minimized by employing erosion control plans and by scheduling the construction during the seasonal low flow period. Detailed erosion control measures will be in place prior to construction activities.
5. The project is in conformity with the Massachusetts air quality regulations (see Section 5.11 of the Environmental Assessment).

Based on review and evaluation of the environmental effects as presented in the Environmental Assessment, the Service has determined that the Manhan River Fish Passage Project is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the Service has determined that this project is exempt from requirements to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

04 Jan 2010

Date



Thomas R. Chapman, Supervisor
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Reference:

Environmental Assessment, dated 04 Jan, 2010